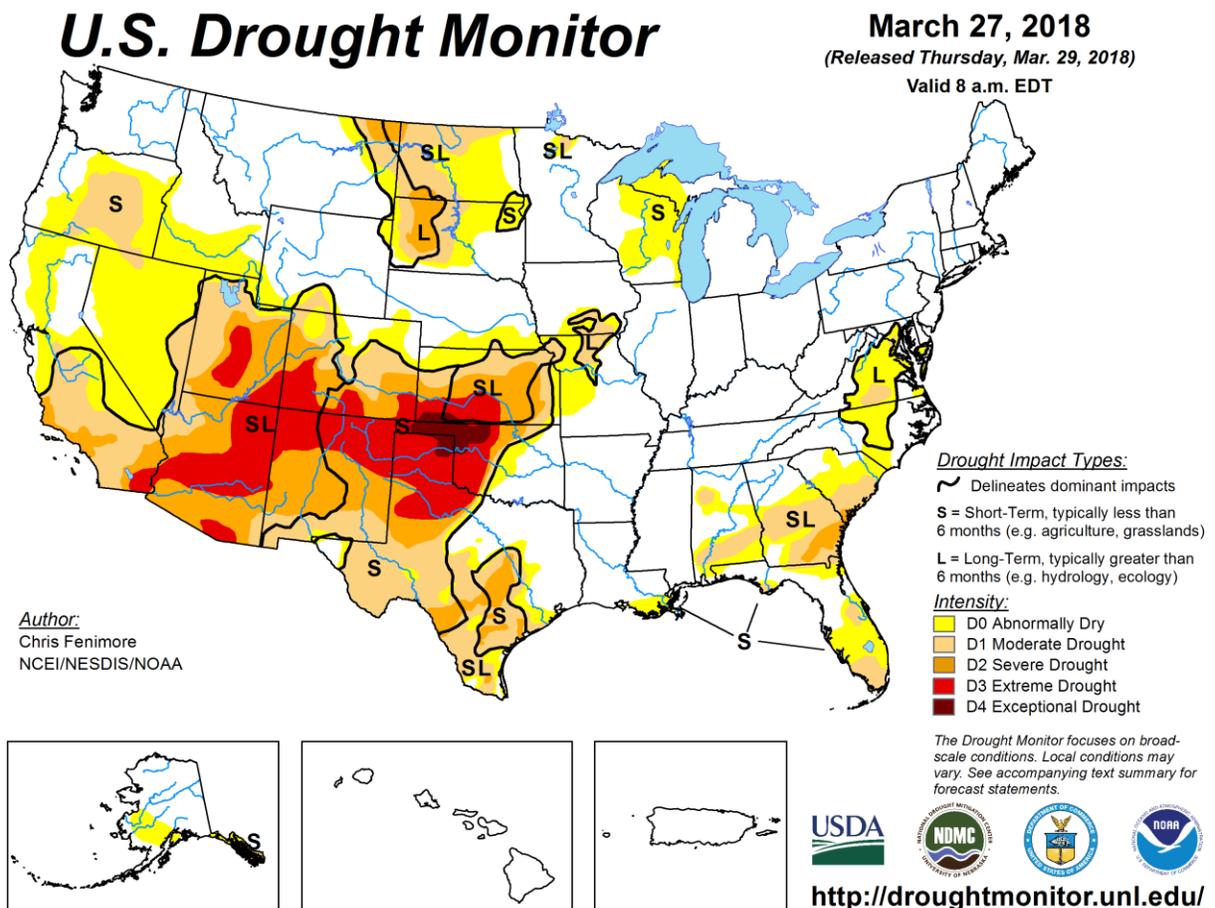


## DISASTER PREPAREDNESS – HOT WEATHER & DROUGHTS

All of us are possible victims of heat-related illness, however hot weather is especially concerning for:

- Infants and small children up to about 4 years of age
- Seniors 65 and older. Some medications or combinations of them can have an adverse effect on the body's ability to regulate heat.
- Persons with cognitive challenges who might not pick up on the dangers of their environments
- Those who already have physical ailments, especially heart disease or high blood pressure.

While not a "Disaster" which will spawn a scary movie like Asteroids, Tornados, Tsunamis or Hurricanes, droughts are every bit as deadly and can have as significant consequences. According to NOAA's State of the Climate report 2018 ( <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/drought/201802> ) According to the weekly U.S. Drought Monitor (USDM), about 31.3 percent of the contiguous U.S. (CONUS) (about 26.2 percent of the U.S. including Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico) was classified as experiencing moderate to exceptional (D1-D4) drought at the end of February.



The above figure shows that 20 of the “Lower 48 States” have some areas of moderate or greater severities of drought. While Hurricane Sandy garnered the lion’s share of the press with 113 deaths as the 2nd highest toll from a Hurricane since 1972, the Texas drought/heat-wave of 2011 killed 95 with far less fanfare.

**Water Conservation Water Usage** – check for leaky toilets, faucets. Placing a bucket in the shower will catch waste water that can be used for plant watering. When “running water”, think about turning it off while shaving, brushing teeth. We have another article on Water Conservation, and there are MANY ways to use less water by breaking old and inefficient habits. If you are on public water, you will also see your water and waste/sewage bills goes down.

**Fire Safety** - This is a special concern, especially in areas where wild-fires during heat-waves or droughts are a concern. Fires pose obvious dangers, but they compound the problem by:

1. Requiring even more water to put them out
2. Generating more heat and making things even dryer
3. Creating smoke and breathing hazards
4. Burning off vegetation. Vegetation and trees help keep the ground cooler.

Be VERY local aware of Fire warnings. Know that high wind brings a high amount of available oxygen to a fire source and windy days can be especially dangerous. According to the National Fire Protection Agency, 90,000 fires per year are caused by cigarettes.(1)

### **Hot weather preparedness**

1. **Don’t go outdoors if you don’t have to**, and if you do, plan to avoid the hottest parts of the day. Heat doesn’t just affect people. As an example, it can cause your car to break-down stranding you for a long time outside.
2. While you are indoors, make sure it is a **well ventilated area**. Air circulation helps cooling. Opening windows, fans or air conditioning or cooling showers or baths can be useful. Note that a fan blowing high 90 degree air will not be helpful. A public library or shopping mall or heat relief shelter may be good options. Your local health department or social services can be helpful in locating one.
3. If you do go outside, **dress to stay cool** - loose-fitting, light-colored clothes, light-colored wide-brimmed hats, sunglasses and sunscreen are always helpful to have on-hand. City dwellers may have addition complications from smog due to temperature inversions. Cities also become heat sinks and concrete and asphalt release heat during the evening so that it may never really cool off after dark.

4. **Drink Plenty of Water** – you don't realize just how much water you perspire. Carry a water bottle. If your doctor limits the amount of fluids you drink, you should ask how much more you need in hot weather.
5. **Avoid Alcohol and Caffeine and High Sugar drinks**– while these are in many beverages, they cause your body to lose more water. If you are on low-sodium diet, check with your doctor about consuming “sports drinks”.
6. **Avoid Heavy Meals** as these can put added stress on the body's cooling system – eat lighter.
7. **Limit or avoid all Strenuous Activities.**
8. **Never leave anyone or pets in a closed parked car.** Temperatures can quickly exceed 120 degrees inside the vehicle and push a person or pet into a critical heat-related medical emergency.
9. If you are an older adult, **have someone check on you** at least twice a day.
10. Don't cause an emergency – be especially careful with **any open fire** or flame. A **carelessly discarded cigarette** can cause misery for many and the smoke generated from a large fire can disrupt breathing areas of several States.

### **Heat Related Medical Emergencies**

A milder form of heat exposure and inadequate fluids is “**Heat Exhaustion**”. Symptoms may include:

- Tiredness, dizziness and/or fainting
- Heavy Sweating
- Skin: often pale, cool and moist
- Headache, Nausea, vomiting, muscle cramps

Here is a link to first aid for Heat Exhaustion: <http://firstaid.webmd.com/heat-exhaustiontreatment>

If allowed to progress, this can turn into Heat Stroke which is a VERY SERIOUS condition. The body is no longer able to control its temperature. Body temperature can rise above 106 degrees quickly and cause permanent disability or death if emergency treatment is not provided. Search “Heat Stroke” elsewhere on the internet to get very good information on what to do. Symptoms include some of the Heat Exhaustion ones except:

- The body temperature has gone above 103 degrees
- The skin is now hot and dry (no longer sweating)
- Often a throbbing headache or confusion, restlessness or anxiety or even unconsciousness. 9-1-1 needs to be activated immediately for this person.

Here is a link for first aid for Heat Stroke: <http://firstaid.webmd.com/tc/emergency-first-aid-for-heatstroke-topic-overview>

Another good link: <https://www.drought.gov/drought/>

Footnotes: (1) The Smoking-Material Fire Problem, November 2007, NFPA

Copyright AGIS Network, April 2018